

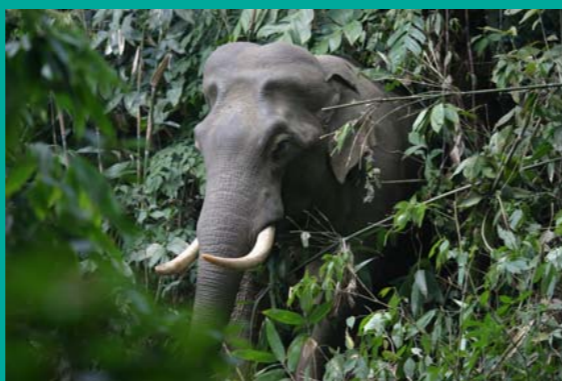
and planners with a powerful tool to ensure long-term protection of contiguous tiger and prey habitat.

Understanding the root causes of human wildlife conflict is key to successful conflict prevention, management and mitigation. Comparative studies in areas of high, medium and zero livestock depredation by tigers will be studied to better understand the nature of the conflict . Existing schemes aimed at minimizing, preventing and mitigating conflict, such as improved livestock husbandry and management, compensation for livestock depredation, and pasture improvement, will be assessed for effectiveness in preventing or managing human wildlife conflict. Results from this study will be used to guide future initiatives on human wildlife conflict management.

In order to carry out the major components of the project as mentioned above, an enabling environment will be generated through capacity building (training), education and awareness, and trans-boundary cooperation. Major components of this project, such as the collection of ecological data and anti-poaching data, will be replicated in other areas to aid in the implementation of management plans for the various protected areas and corridors within the B2C2 landscape.

### Conservation of wild elephants

WWF is supporting NCD (Nature Conservation Division) with a grant amount of Nu. 0.424 million to implement a one year project (2005-2006) on wild elephant conservation. This project is aimed at collecting first-hand information on the status and distribution of elephants in the country. Beginning in July, 2005 there will be a nationwide baseline study on the distribution of the elephants; at the same time, socio-economic surveys will be conducted with the magnitude and extent of the human elephant conflict assessed. Upon completion of the project, it is expected that a priority action plan will be drawn up.



A tusker at Gedu

### WWF Clean Dzongkhag Award

World Environment Day also saw the second, WWF initiated, Clean Dzongkhags (Districts) Award ceremony, which went to the three dzongkhags of Tsirang, Samdrup Jongkhar and Trongsa. HE, Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji. The Minister for Works and Human Settlement, presented the awards. The National Environment Commission showed appreciation for this noble initiative by the WWF; they said that it has come at the right time to make people aware of the importance of keeping our country clean and green. The recipient Dzongdas (District Magistrates) also expressed their gratitude and appreciation in support of such a good cause and were happy to receive the prizes. The prize money of Nu. 1,50,000 each will be utilized for developmental activities of the recipient districts.



The three district magistrates who received the Clean Dzongkhag Award '05



# PANDA Quarterly

Bhutan Program

Summer 2005

### News Briefs

**Protected Area coverage expanded:**  
The Bhutan PA was further increased by another 502 sq. km. The decision was made to increase the area for tigers and snowleopards.

This happened in Thrumshingla National Park which increased to 905 sq. km from 768 sq km and Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary to 1545sq. km from 1180 sq km.

**Visitors:**

Dr. Eric Dinerstein, VP, Conservation Science, WWF US and Professor David S. Wilcove, Princeton University, were here in the country to look at the possible linkages between conservation science and GIS activities for Bhutan.

**Organization Assessment:**

The country representative and the division heads visited WWF US, WWF UK and WWF International to present the findings of the organization assessment, conducted between Sept. '04 - March '05, and seek possible funding for the implementation of the Action Plan.

**Publication to be released:**

**1. Snow Leopard document:**  
The proceedings of the Snow Leopard meeting held in Paro, Bhutan has been completed and distributed to all the participants key people.

**2. SWS report:**  
The final report on the biodiversity survey of the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary, conducted by two conservation scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India, has been completed. This report will be used as input to prepare the management plan for the sanctuary.

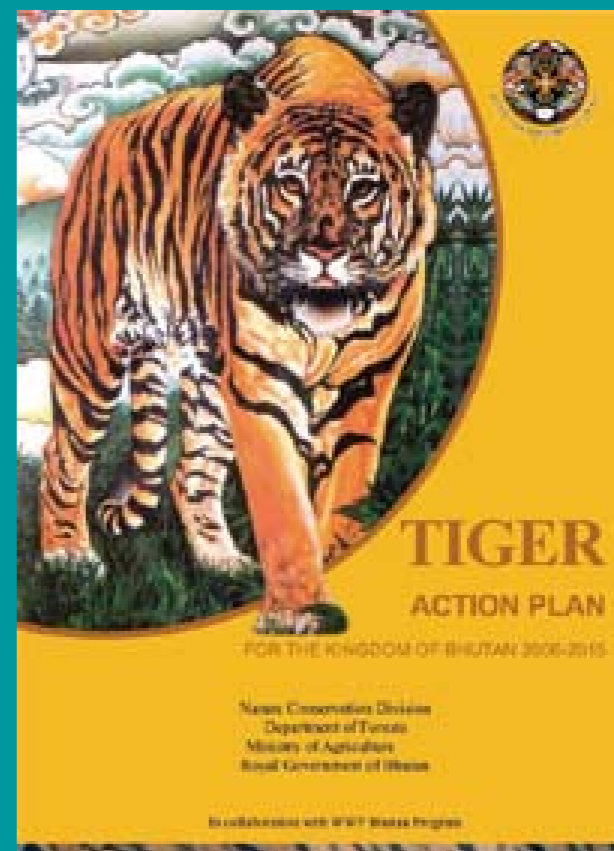
**3. DGIS:**  
An evaluation on the three DGIS sites has been conducted. A report to assessing the effects of the project is being compiled.

### Implementation of the National Tiger Action Plan for Kingdom of Bhutan

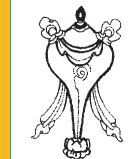
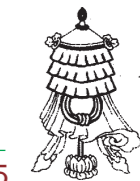
In implementing the 10 year Tiger Action Plan for Bhutan, the initial focus will be on the first 3 years. A proposal for US \$ 229,580 is already prepared and fund sought. Critical ecological information such as tiger and prey species distribution, relative abundance and habitat conditions will be generated from grid-based sampling surveys in the area of focus (Royal Manas-Jigme Singye Wangchuck-Jigme Dorji National Parks and connected corridors). Such information will be used as the basis for long-term conservation plans. Anti-poaching capacity will be built through training and the formation of an informers' network to aid PA and Forest Department staff. On the policy side, a long awaited revision of the Schedule of Fines in the Forest and Nature Conservation Act, 1995 will be carried out to make penalties more stringent.

A nation-wide critical tiger habitat analysis will be carried out by assessing forest cover and its quality based on satellite imagery, GIS and field-truthing. Forest cover change, detection and closer assessments will help identify critical breaks in connectivity, potentially threatened habitat and core areas. A

c l o s e r investigation of land-use patterns and plans for such areas will be carried out through multi-sector consultations and an analysis of legal and policy gaps in the protection, management and use of these areas. This will then provide conservationists



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### World Environment Day, 5<sup>th</sup> June

Green Cities Plan for the Planet!" was the theme for this year's World Environmental Day.

In Bhutan, the occasion was graced by the Honorable Minister for Works and Human Settlement, Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji. Various participants from national offices, NGO's, schools and International bodies also took part in addressing the importance of the day.

All the guest speakers stressed the importance of the middle path of development, especially in the urban centers and cities. Though Bhutan embraced the concept of modern development fairly recently, a lot of development activities can be seen, especially in a few urban centers like Thimphu and Phuntsholing. A lot of construction is taking place which could have negative impact on the natural environment. A lot of forests around our towns are being destroyed to accommodate the ever-growing population. Though development is inevitable, Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji said that development and the environment can coexist.

To commemorate the day, a garbage collection competition was conducted prior to June 5<sup>th</sup> in which students from all schools took part. Students were awarded prizes and certificates in recognition for their efforts. The participation of these students was an excellent vehicle to involve them in taking care of the environment and making them aware of the importance of our wealth of natural resources.

"The occasion of World Environment Day is an opportunity to reflect on the impact our lifestyle has on the Mother Earth and commit ourselves to change our behavior to alleviate this impact," concluded Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji.

### Professional Eco-tourism Guides' Training

For the first time in the history of the country, the Tourism Authority of Bhutan is conducting professional eco-tourism guides' training, focusing on the environment and human interaction. Along with the regular cultural and historical subjects, special considerations have been made to include the environment in the syllabus for the trainees this year. As one of the trainers put it, "We cannot ignore nature. Our country is known for its conservation efforts and we have realized that our tourist guides are not trained to interpret nature correctly".

This time, there is yet another improvement in the training; all the trainees are university graduates, making this batch the most educated lot of tourist guides to be trained to date. The authority feels that this is an improvement and has received a positive response from the youth of Bhutan; it is felt this will provide quality service to the tourists. One of the trainees, Sonam, said that, "Till now all the tourist guides were less educated so I thought that I could make a difference by being among the first graduates to join this profession".

"There are lots of tourists who visit our country, especially for bird watching or nature trekking, and we need specially trained guides who can talk about these topics, so this time we hope to bridge that gap,"

### Conservation of the White-bellied Heron in Bhutan

The White-bellied Heron, a globally endangered bird species, is found in Bhutan where the bird has been studied for two years (2003 and 2004) by RSPN (Royal Society for Protection of Nature). Whilst this research has greatly added to available documentation, it has not provided information on the national significance of the bird, as the study areas were restricted to a few localized sites.

Therefore, WWF and RSPN recognize the need to fill this information gap by conducting a countrywide study on the distribution and ecology of the species and its ecological importance. WWF, through its B2C2 project, is supporting RSPN with a grant of Nu. 1,562,550 for three years (2005 through 2008). In addition to species ecology, distribution, food habits and population, a study of the socio-demographic profiles of the communities in the immediate vicinity of White-bellied Heron habitats also will be carried out. The survey findings will be published and disseminated to the relevant stakeholders and partners (government, communities and the general public) in order to raise awareness. The findings will also be used to prepare a White-bellied Heron conservation programme/strategy to be implemented after 2007 in close collaboration with national and international partners. A database will be maintained at RSPN and will be made available for all WBH conservation activities.

said one of the organizers. This will also give them a well-rounded training, he added.

"This training course has been made possible through the generous financial support of the WWF," acknowledged the Director General of Tourism, Dasho Lhatu Wangchuk.

For WWF Bhutan it opens the possibility of using tourism as a tool for nature conservation. In addition, this is a good opportunity to express our feeling for nature by making the future generations of Bhutan the ambassadors of conservation. Well educated tourist guides will promote responsible tourism activities in Bhutan. This means Bhutan will develop as a "green" tourism destination, which will enhance the tourism sector. For tour operators and the government of Bhutan this provides an opportunity; well managed natural areas are of major importance for future tourism business development due to an increasing market demand for "green" destinations.

The trainees



White-bellied heron with a new born chick

Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji opening the ceremony



Dasho Karma Dorji opening the training

